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PACT OF DEATH



4 ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

★ No. 89 **NO HIGHER STAKES**

Tanks . . . guns . . . men . . . all were mere pieces on his chessboard of war

★ No. 90 **SPOILS OF WAR**

Flying roughnecks of Transport Command—their cargo—TROUBLE!

★ No. 91 **COVER OF DARKNESS**

His was a fighting spirit that would never die . . .

★ No. 92 **ONE MAN'S GLORY**

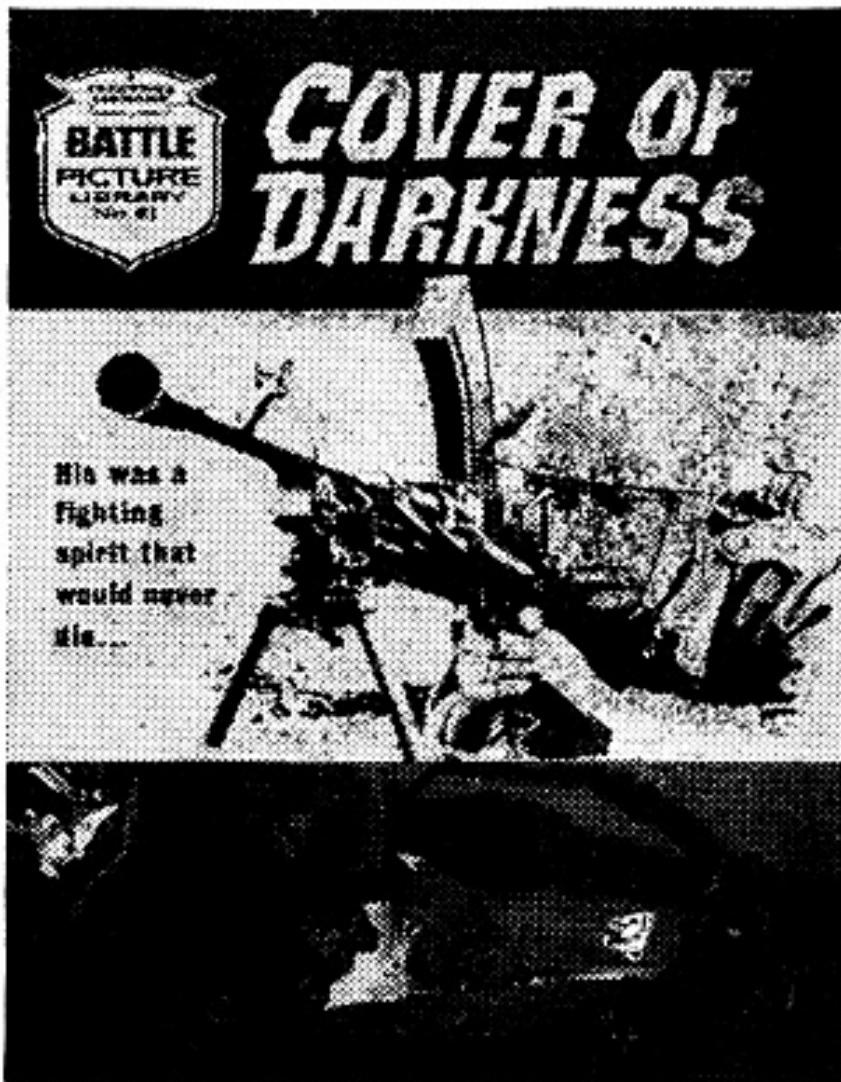
Bofors v. Panzers . . . in a duel to destruction

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PACT OF DEATH

THE PACT WAS MADE BY THREE SCHOOLBOYS. A LOT OF PACTS ARE MADE BY SCHOOLBOYS, AND MOST OF THEM ARE FORGOTTEN AS THOSE WHO MADE THEM GROW OLDER. BUT THIS PACT WAS SEALED IN BLOOD...



Chapter 1. *Tarnished Glory*

IT HAPPENED IN THE SPRING OF 1939, WHEN A PARTY OF SIXTH-FORMERS FROM ST. GAUL'S WENT ROCK-CLIMBING IN SNOWDONIA UNDER THEIR P.T. INSTRUCTOR, SERGEANT DONOVAN...



FOUR OF THE BOYS MADE AN ATTEMPT THAT DAY ON THE NOTORIOUS GAMBIT TRAVERSE ON THE WESTERN SLOPES OF SNOWDON. IT HAD NOT BEEN CLIMBED IN SIXTY YEARS...

BELAY
YOURSSELVES...
I'LL MAKE ANOTHER
TWENTY FEET...

RIGHT, CON...
WE MUST BE
NEARLY OUT OF
THIS CHIMNEY.



AT NOON, WHEN THEY WERE TRAVERSING THE LAST SHEER ROCK FACE TWO THOUSAND FEET UP, THE YOUNGEST OF THE FOUR WAS ATTACKED BY CRAMP...

HOLD IT,
CHAPS... MY
LEG! I CAN'T
GO ANY
FARTHER.

STICK IT,
PENN... THERE'S
ONLY ANOTHER
NINETY FEET
TO GO!



PENN WAS WELL-BELAYED. BUT WHEN HIS CRAMPED LEG MISSED ITS NEXT FOOTHOLD THE ROPE SNAPPED UNDER HIS SUDDEN OUTFLUNG WEIGHT.

AAAGH!

HE FELL FORTY FEET, BUT THE THREE OTHERS SAW HIM WAVE AN ARM FROM THE NARROW LEDGE WHICH HAD BROKEN HIS FALL...

I-I SUPPOSE WE OUGHT TO GO DOWN TO HIM...

YES... BUT HE'S WAVING, LOOK!

HE MUST BE ALL RIGHT, THEN...



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Pact of Death.

THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER TENSELY. THE THREE OF THEM, CON CONNOR, BRIAN MACE, STEVE LYNCH. THE SAME HUNGER FOR GLORY WAS IN ALL THEIR EYES...

ONLY SIXTY FEET TO GO TO THE TOP, CHAPS...

AND IF WE CLIMB DOWN TO PENN NOW WE SHAN'T GET A SECOND CHANCE!

WE CAN GET TO THE TOP FIRST AND SEE TO PENN AFTERWARDS... IT WON'T TAKE US LONG!



PENN WAS STILL WAVING FROM THE LEDGE AS THE THREE COMPANIONS WENT ON CLIMBING UPWARDS...

ALL RIGHT, YOU TWO... BUT HURRY...

PENN WOULD WANT US TO CONQUER THE GAMBIT FIRST...



SHORTLY AFTER NOON, FROM THE RANGER HOTEL THREE THOUSAND FEET BELOW, SERGEANT DONOVAN SAW THE FIGURES ON THE SUMMIT OF THE GAMBIT TRAVERSE. BUT THERE WERE ONLY THREE OF THEM...



CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH HAD ACHIEVED THEIR MOMENT OF GLORY. BUT ALREADY THE TASTE OF IT WAS BITTER IN THEIR MOUTHS...

WE DID IT, CHAPS!

ALL RIGHT... SO WE DID IT... NOW LET'S GET DOWN TO PENN.

YES, IT'S HALF AN HOUR SINCE WE LEFT HIM.

IT TOOK THEM LONGER TO CLIMB DOWN TO THE LEDGE WHERE PENN LAY. PENN WAS NO LONGER WAVING...

HE'S LYING PRETTY STILL, CON...

SHUT UP, BRIAN... TAKE MY WEIGHT...

HURRY. YOU TWO... HURRY!

THERE WAS NO HUNGER IN THEIR EYES NOW. NO GLORY, ONLY SHAME.

HE'S DEAD!

NO- NO!

OH...

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Part of Death

THE RESCUE PARTY,
ALERTED BY SERGEANT
DONOVAN, MET THEM ON
THE LOWER SLOPES. THE
DOCTOR WHO EXAMINED
THE BODY GAVE HIS
VERDICT...

THE INJURIES
WERE BAD, BUT NOT
FATAL. THE BOY DIED OF
EXPOSURE AFTER SHOCK.
HE'D BE ALIVE NOW IF
SOMEONE HAD REACHED
HIM IMMEDIATELY AFTER
HIS FALL, COVERED HIM
UP, TENDED HIM...

THE THREE BOYS TOLD THEIR
STORY IN THE CORONER'S
COURT. FRANKLY, HIDING
NOTHING. THAT NEEDED
MORE COURAGE THAN THE
GAMBIT CLIMB...

WELL, YOU THREE,
YOU HAD A PLAIN CHOICE
BETWEEN SAVING A PAL'S
LIFE AND GRABBING SOME
GLORY. YOU CHOSE THE
GLORY. I HOPE IT MAKES
YOU PROUD...

BUT,
DONOVAN -

SHUT UP,
LYNCH - HE'S
RIGHT, AND WE
KNOW IT!

Pact of Death

THE REST OF THE SCHOOL SHUNNED THE THREE BOYS DURING THEIR LAST YEAR AT ST. GAUL'S. THE ACCUSATIONS WERE WILD, BUT THE TRUTH WAS UGLY ENOUGH...

PENN WAS WAVING TO THEM, SHOUTING TO THEM FOR HELP...

YES... AND THEY JUST TURNED THEIR BACKS ON HIM...

THEY KILLED HIM... THAT'S WHAT THEY DID... THEY KILLED HIM!

SO THEY MADE A PACT, CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH. AND THEY SWEARED THEY WOULD KEEP IT...

ALL RIGHT... LET'S PUT OUR HANDS TOGETHER ON THAT...

SAY IT AGAIN THEN, CON...

WE THREE SWEAR... SOME TIME, SOMEHOW, THAT EACH OF US WILL SAVE THE LIFE OF ONE MAN!

Chapter 2. *Three Men*

IN THE LATE SUMMER OF 1942, AT A COMBINED OPERATIONS BASE PREPARATIONS BEGAN FOR A FULL-SCALE RAID ON THE GERMAN NAVAL BASE OF ST. PALAISE.



COLONEL GAINSFORD
WAS TO LEAD THE
RAID. HE BELIEVED
IN PICKING HIS
OFFICERS CAREFULLY...



Pact of Death

9

COLONEL GAINSFORD STUDIED THE FIRST OF THE THREE RECORDS AS THE ADJUTANT TALKED...



MACE'S M.T.B. WAS BASED ON GIRVAN LAST AUTUMN, SIR. ONE NIGHT IN SEPTEMBER, AN OIL TANKER WAS TORPEDOED OFF AILSA CRAIG IN HIS PATROL AREA...

60 Pact of Death

THE U-BOAT COMMANDER MUST HAVE BEEN TOO CLOSE TO HIS VICTIM. THE EXPLOSION DROVE HIS VESSEL TO THE SURFACE...

TEUFEL!
WHAT IS THE
DAMAGE,
ROSNER?

STARBOARD
BALLAST TANK IS
DEFECTIVE, HERR
KAPITAN. WE SHALL
HAVE TO STAY ON THE
SURFACE FOR A FEW
HOURS TO REPAIR
IT!



THERE WERE ONLY A FEW SURVIVORS FROM THE TANKER. THE U-BOAT PICKED THEM UP AND HEADED WEST ON THE SURFACE...

THAT IS
THE LAST OF
THE BRITISH SURVIVORS,
HERR KAPITAN.

RESUME COURSE,
ROSNER. GET THOSE
REPAIRS DONE... WE
ARE TOO NEAR THE
COAST FOR MY
LIKING...



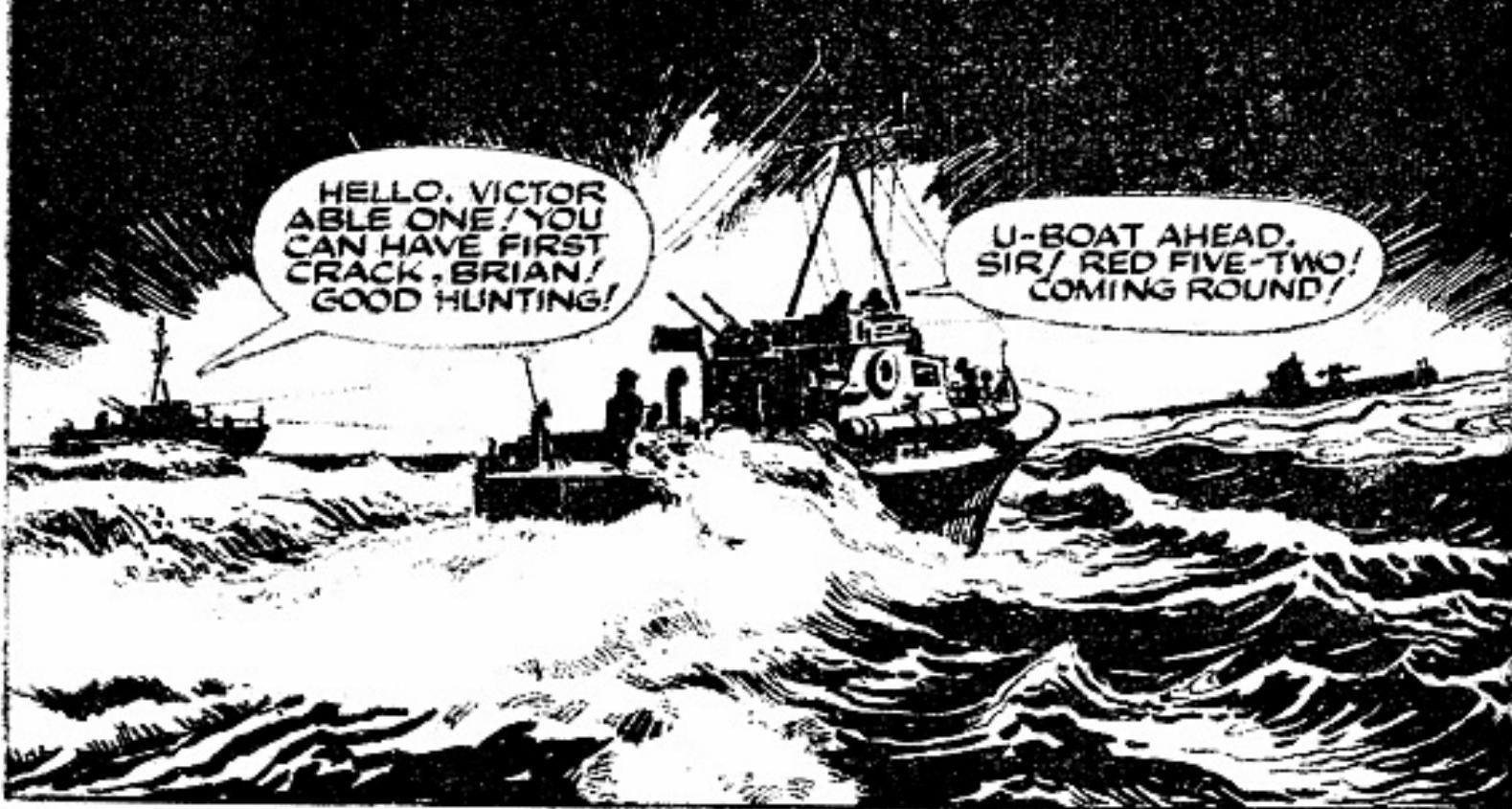
Pact of Death

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THE U-BOAT WAS STILL ON THE SURFACE WHEN THE TWO M.T.BS FROM GIRVAN PICKED HER UP AT MIDNIGHT. SHE TURNED TO FIGHT...

HELLO, VICTOR ABLE ONE! YOU CAN HAVE FIRST CRACK, BRIAN! GOOD HUNTING!

U-BOAT AHEAD, SIR! RED FIVE-TWO! COMING ROUND!



SUB-LIEUTENANT BRIAN MACE WAS IN COMMAND OF VICTOR ABLE ONE, THE U-BOAT WAS BRACKETING HIS M.T.B WITH SHELLFIRE, BUT HE CLOSED AT TOP SPEED...

ROGER,
VICTOR ABLE LEADER, HERE I GO!

STARBOARD TUBE-READY!

PORT TUBE-READY!



Pact of Death

THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT MACE INTENDED TO ATTACK THAT U-BOAT. AND IT WAS NOT THE SHELLFIRE WHICH STOPPED HIM. APPARENTLY IT WAS WHAT HE SAW THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS...

JERRY'S
GETTING OUR
RANGE, SIR—

HOLD IT,
BOSUN — WE'RE
MAKING SURE OF
THIS ONE. LET'S
JUST TAKE A
DEKKO AT HER
NUMBER.

THE U-BOAT COMMANDER
HAD GOT THE SURVIVORS OF
THE BRITISH TANKER OUT ON
THE CONNING TOWER HATCH.
THEY WERE WAVING. THAT
WAS WHAT MACE SAW...

VICTOR ABLE ONE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH NOW TO USE HER TORPEDOES. BUT SHE NEVER FIRED THEM. SHE SLEWED AWAY FROM THE U-BOAT...

WHAT THE HECK, SIR—

I CAN'T TINFISH THAT JERRY, BOSUN — I CAN'T, I TELL YOU — HOLD YOUR FIRE!



MACE'S BOSUN SWORE AT THE ENQUIRY THAT THERE WAS NO FEAR IN MACE'S VOICE AT THAT MOMENT...

BUT, SIR — WE'LL NEVER GET A BETTER CHANCE TO GRAB A U-BOAT —

MAYBE NOT, BOSUN — BUT I GRABBED A CHANCE OF GLORY BEFORE, ONCE — AND SOMEONE ELSE PAID FOR IT.



VICTOR ABLE ONE CAME SWIRLING OUT THROUGH THE GUNSPLASHES WITH HER TORPEDOES STILL IN HER TUBES...

HELLO, VICTOR ABLE ONE — WHAT THE BLAZES GOES ON?

HELLO, VICTOR ABLE LEADER — SORRY, SIR — BUT THERE ARE PRISONERS ABOARD THAT U-BOAT — BRITISH SURVIVORS. I CAN'T TINFISH HER AND RISK KILLING THEM...



THE COMMANDER OF THE OTHER M.T.B.
PUT HIS WHEEL OVER AND BORED IN
TOWARDS THE U-BOAT. MACE DID NOT
FOLLOW HIM...



WELL, SHE'S
A U-BOAT - AND SHE'S
GOT TO BE SUNK. MACE
HAS GOT IT MIXED UP
SOMEWHERE ALONG
THE LINE -

BOTH
TUBES READY,
SIR -

THE FLOTILLA LEADER WON HIMSELF A D.S.O. THAT DAY. HE DID NO MORE THAN
MACE HAD DONE, EXCEPT THAT WHEN HE REACHED THE FIRING POINT HE
USED BOTH TUBES...



TORPS
AWAY!

THE U-BOAT MUST HAVE HAD HER OWN TUBES LOADED. SHE BLEW UP. THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS, GERMAN OR BRITISH...



SHE HAD TO BE SUNK, THAT U-BOAT, DESPITE THE BRITISH PRISONERS ABOARD HER. THE COURT OF INQUIRY AGREED THAT AFTERWARDS, MACE'S CREW AGREED IT AT THE TIME...

LUMME! WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE SKIPPER... THROWING UP A CHANCE LIKE THAT.

MAYBE HE DOESN'T WANT A U-BOAT TO HIS CREDIT... AND LEAVE AND GONGS ALL ROUND...



Pact of Death

NO... I DON'T WANT A GONG... NOT IF IT MEANS KILLING INNOCENT MEN. BUT THEY DIED, THOSE POOR DEVILS, JUST THE SAME. SO I STILL HAVEN'T SAVED THE LIFE OF THAT ONE MAN!

THE ADJUTANT STOPPED TALKING. COLONEL GAINSFORD CLOSED THE RECORD OF SUB-LIEUTENANT BRIAN MACE.

WELL... THAT'S ALL THERE IS ON MACE, SIR.

YES, ADJ. HE SEEMS A GOOD TYPE... APART FROM THAT ONE QUESTION MARK.



COLONEL GAINSFORD PICKED UP THE SECOND OF THE THREE RECORDS. HE TAPPED HIS FINGERS AGAINST IT, THOUGHTFULLY...

YOU KNOW, ADJ. MEN VOLUNTEER FOR DICEY RAIDS LIKE THIS PALAISE SHOW FOR ALL SORTS OF QUEER REASONS. I WONDER WHAT MACE'S REASON WAS?

MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT, SIR... IF YOU PICK HIM NOW, THE SECOND ONE, SIR.

THE ADJUTANT
LEANED OVER TO
LOOK AT THE NAME
ON THE SECOND
RECORD... 

16 AH, YES... LYNCH.
STEPHEN LYNCH, JOINED
THE R.A.F IN EARLY 'FORTY
THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY
AIR SQUADRON. GOT HIS
WINGS IN JANUARY 'FORTY-
ONE, POSTED TO A
FIGHTER SQUADRON...



IT WAS JUMBO MAITLAND'S SQUADRON,
SIR. ONE OF THE ORIGINAL BATTLE OF
BRITAIN ACES. YOU'LL REMEMBER THAT
EPIC LAST FIGHT OF HIS OVER AMIENS IN
'FORTY-ONE...

COME ON, YOU TWO!
GROUP WANTS US TO
RHUBARB AROUND AMIENS
WHILE THE BOMBER BOYS
PLASTER THE GNOME
WORKS! LET'S GET
WEAVING!

WITH YOU,
SIR...



Pact of Death

LYNCH WAS FLYING WITH JUMBO MAITLAND ON THE DAY OF THAT LAST GREAT FIGHT OF HIS. YOU MIGHT ALMOST SAY THAT LYNCH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT...

GAIN ANGELS.
LYNCH, BARNWELL/
STICK WITH ME AND KEEP
YOUR NECKS TWISTING!
ENEMY COAST AHEAD!



THE FIFTEEN MESSERSCHMITT 109'S WERE WAITING UP-SUN OVER ABBEVILLE. THEY CAME DOWN IN A SOLID WEDGE WHEN THE THREE SPITS BROKE CLOUD COVER BELOW THEM...



LYNCH WAS PORT WINGMAN TO JUMBO MAITLAND THAT DAY. IT WAS HIS JOB TO CALL THE BREAKS TO ATTACKS FROM ASTERN. HE DID THAT JOB COOLLY...



THE STARBOARD WINGMAN
WAS A NEW PILOT, BARNWELL.
HE WAS SLOW IN THE BREAK.
THE MESSERSCHMITTS
FASTENED ON HIM AS HIS
SPITFIRE YAWED...



Part of Death

JUMBO MAITLAND SAW BARNWELL'S AIRCRAFT LOSING HEIGHT AND DRIBBLING GLYCOL. HE KEPT TURNING. IT WAS VITAL NOW THAT THE TWO HEAVILY-OUTNUMBERED SPITFIRES SHOULD KEEP TOGETHER...

LOOK, LEADER -
THEY'VE GOT
BARNWELL -

OKAY, LYNCH -
THERE'S NOTHING WE
CAN DO ABOUT IT. STICK
WITH ME AND KEEP
TURNING...



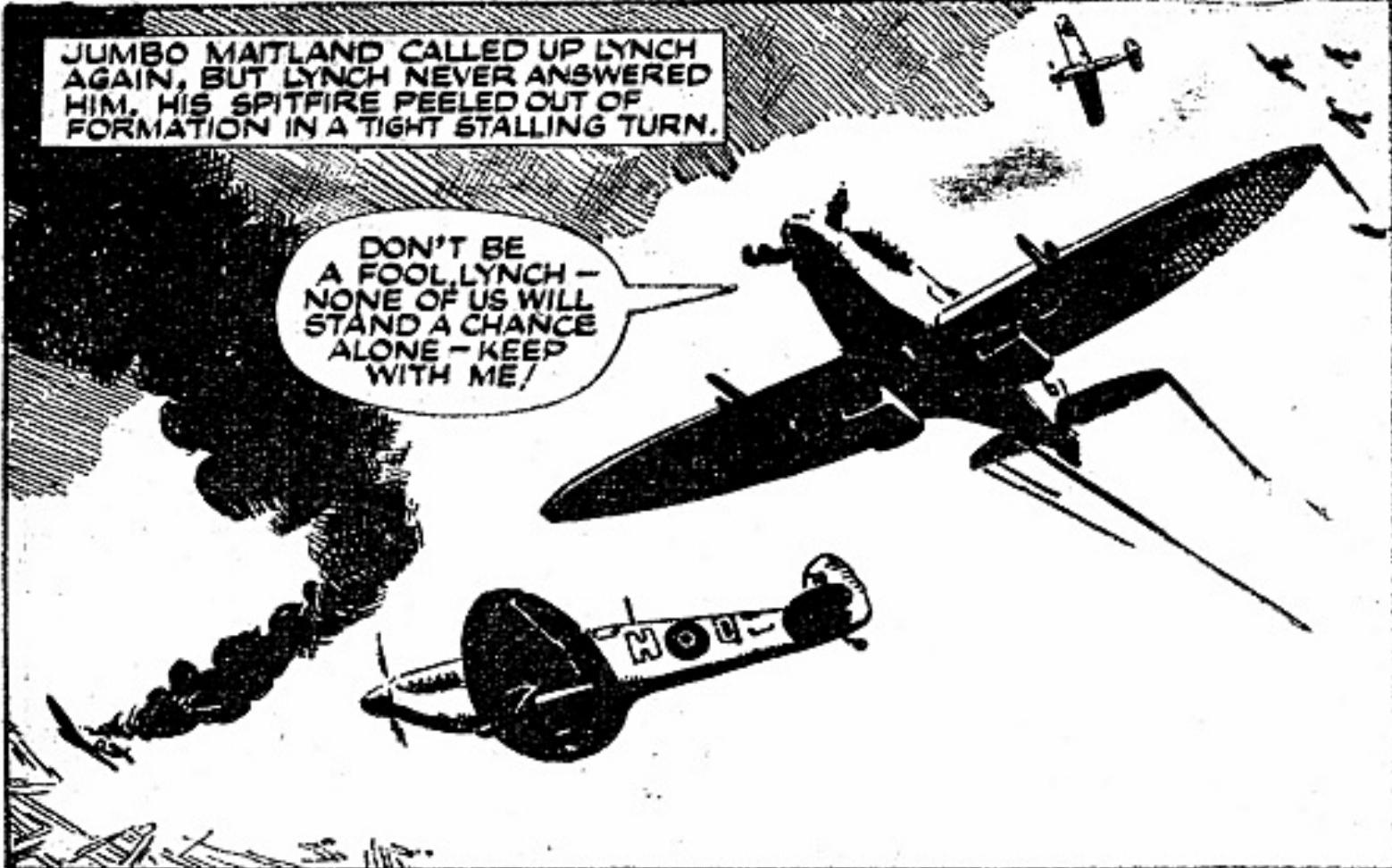
LYNCH ADMITTED AFTERWARDS THAT HE DISOBEDIED HIS LEADER'S ORDERS. HE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HIM THAT HE SHOULD SAVE BARNWELL'S LIFE, THOUGH HE NEVER SAID WHY...

THE SPROG'S STILL GOT A CHANCE, LEADER ... I'M GOING AFTER HIM, MAYBE I CAN SAVE HIM...



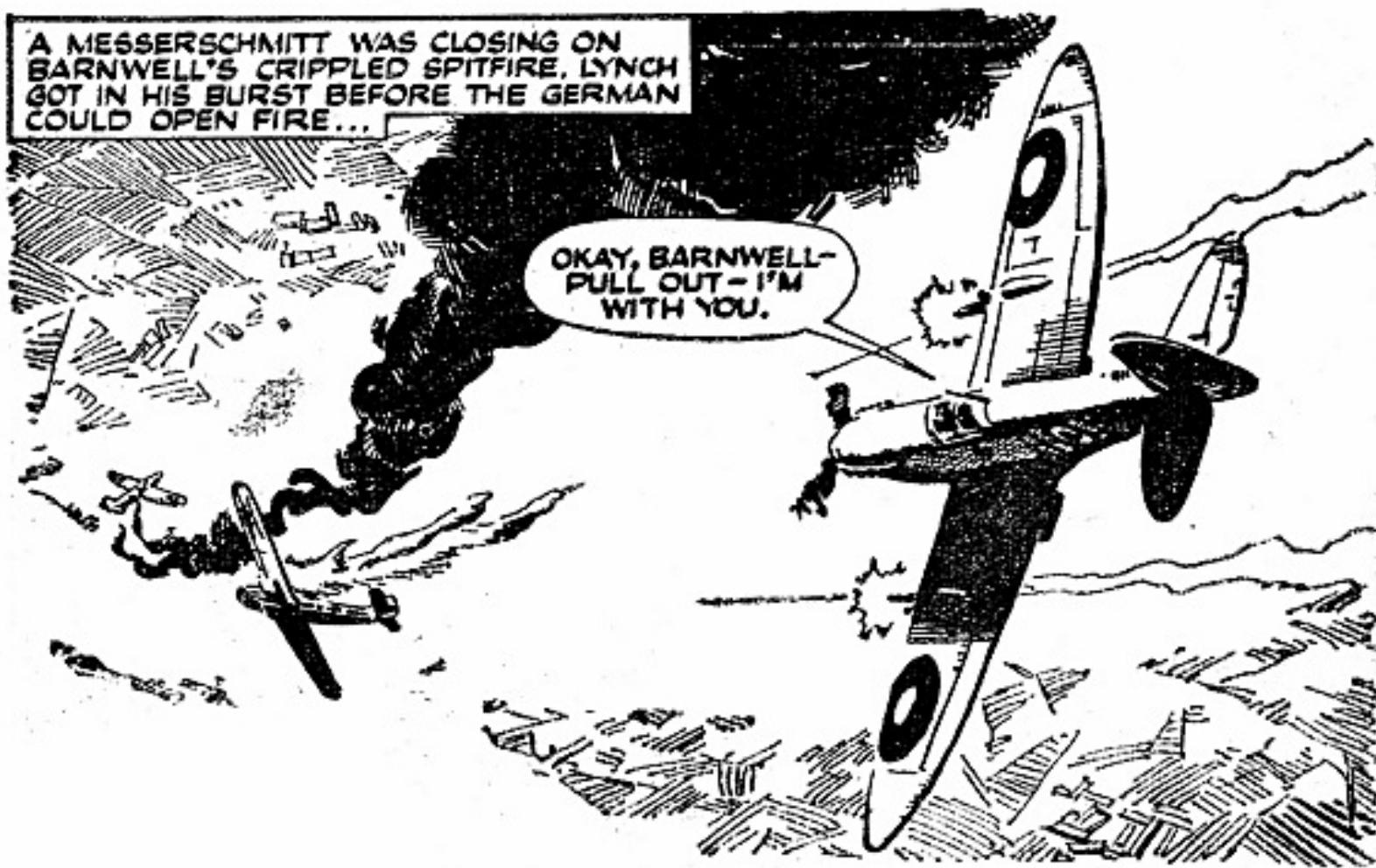
JUMBO MAITLAND CALLED UP LYNCH AGAIN, BUT LYNCH NEVER ANSWERED HIM. HIS SPITFIRE PEELED OUT OF FORMATION IN A TIGHT STALLING TURN.

DON'T BE
A FOOL, LYNCH -
NONE OF US WILL
STAND A CHANCE
ALONE - KEEP
WITH ME!



A MESSERSCHMITT WAS CLOSING ON BARNWELL'S CRIPPLED SPITFIRE, LYNCH GOT IN HIS BURST BEFORE THE GERMAN COULD OPEN FIRE...

OKAY, BARNWELL -
PULL OUT - I'M
WITH YOU.



Pact of Death

BUT BARNWELL NEVER PULLED OUT OF HIS DIVE.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN DEAD BEFORE LYNCH
DISOBEDIED MAITLAND'S ORDER AND CAME
AFTER HIM...



LYNCH REALISED THEN JUST WHAT
HIS DISOBEDIENCE HAD MEANT...



Pact of Death

MAITLAND HEARD LYNCH
ON THE R.T. THE OLD ACE
WAS TURNING, FIRING,
AND HIS VOICE WAS STILL
COOL...



THAT WAS JUMBO MAITLAND'S
LAST GREAT FIGHT. HE FOUGHT
SINGLEHANDED AGAINST
THIRTEEN MESSERSCHMITTS.
BUT HE TOOK SOME OF THEM
WITH HIM...



Pact of Death

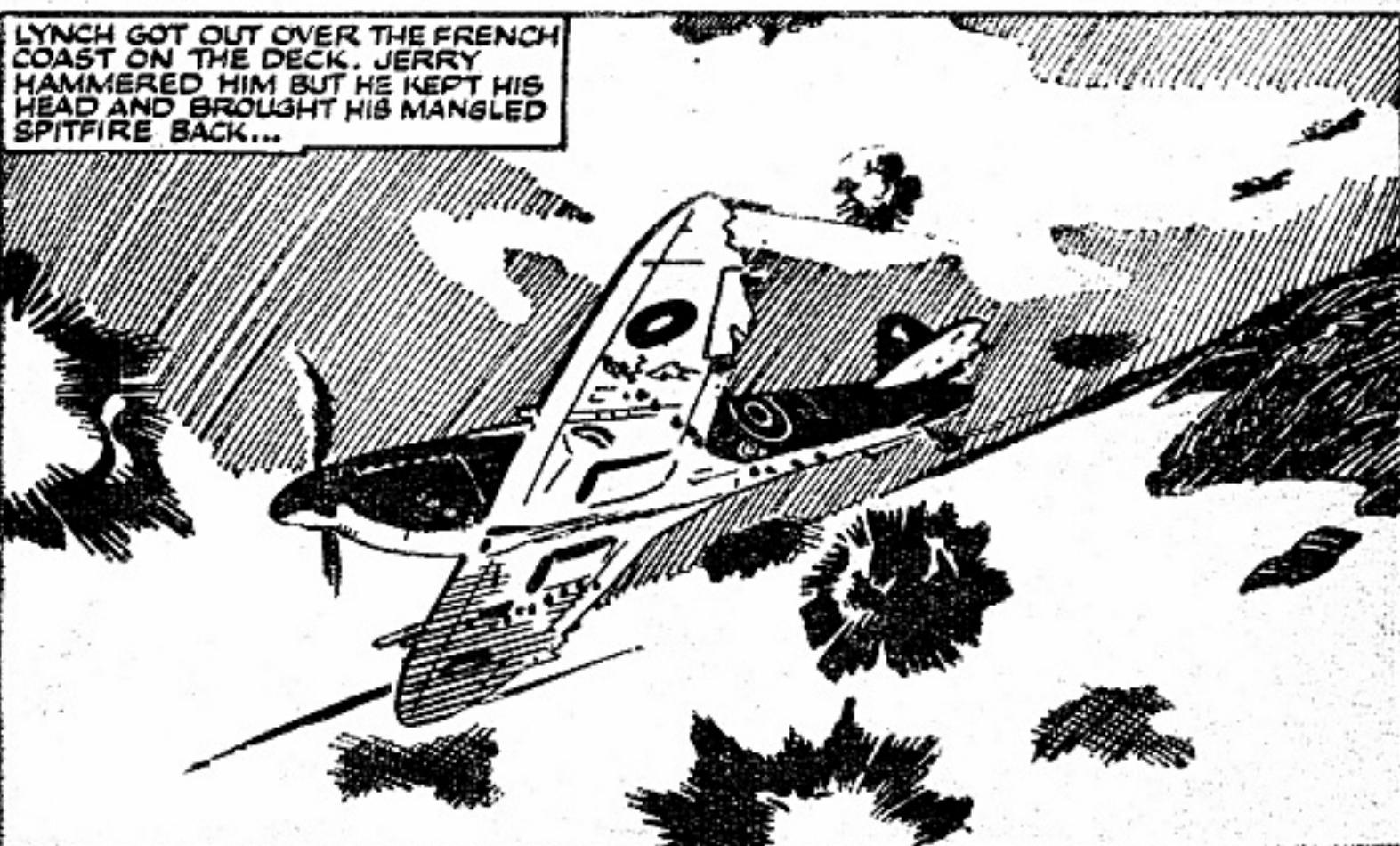
LYNCH WAS STILL DESPERATELY GAINING HEIGHT, STILL TRYING TO RETRIEVE HIS MISTAKE, WHEN MAITLAND'S SPITFIRE FELL PAST HIM...



HE HAD BEEN MAITLAND'S WINGMAN. HIS DUTY HAD BEEN TO COVER HIS LEADER. HE HAD TRIED TO SAVE BARNWELL'S LIFE, USELESSLY, AND HE HAD FAILED HIS LEADER...



LYNCH GOT OUT OVER THE FRENCH COAST ON THE DECK. JERRY HAMMERED HIM BUT HE KEPT HIS HEAD AND BROUGHT HIS MANGLED SPITFIRE BACK...



WHEN THEY PULLED HIM OUT OF HIS SHATTERED COCKPIT AT TANGMERE, LYNCH WAS HALF-CONSCIOUS AND RAMBLING...

EASY WITH HIM, EASY...

IT ALWAYS GOES WRONG - IT'S ALWAYS MY FAULT - AND I STILL HAVEN'T SAVED THE LIFE OF THAT ONE MAN!

THE ADJUTANT STOPPED TALKING. COLONEL GAINSFORD CLOSED THE RECORD OF FLYING OFFICER LYNCH...

WELL... THAT'S THE QUESTION MARK AGAINST LYNCH, SIR...

HE SEEMS TO HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL THE STORY - OR NO-ONE WOULD HAVE KNOWN HOW MAITLAND GOT INTO THAT LAST SCRAP.



COLONEL GAINSFORD LOOKED UP THOUGHTFULLY AT THE ADJUTANT...

DID THE R.A.F. DISCIPLINE LYNCH?

NO, SIR.
THEY DIDN'T NEED TO GROUND HIM, EITHER, BECAUSE HE'D GOT A LEG FULL OF SHELL-FRAGMENTS AND THE MEDICAL BOARD FOUND HIM UNFIT FOR FLYING DUTIES. I IMAGINE THAT'S WHY HE VOLUNTEERED AS OUR AIR LIAISON OFFICER.



Pact of Death

THE ADJUTANT OPENED THE LAST OF THE THREE RECORDS IN FRONT OF COLONEL GAINSFORD.

LET'S SEE NOW... CONNOR. HE WAS COMMISSIONED IN THE SPRING OF 'FORTY, SERVED IN THE WESTERN DESERT. TRANSFERRED TO CRETE JUST BEFORE THE GERMAN ATTACK IN MAY...



A TOUGH GERMAN PARACHUTE REGIMENT DROPPED IN HIS SECTOR, NORTH OF CANAE, ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE GERMAN INVASION...



THE GERMANS PUT IN A STRONG ATTACK AT DUSK THAT DAY AND CAPTURED THE PERICLOS HEIGHTS. THEY COULD RANGE THE BRITISH LINES NOW WITH THEIR MEDIUM ARTILLERY...



WE'VE GOT TO
DISLodge THE ENEMY
FROM THE RIDGE, MAJOR,
OR OUR WHOLE
POSITION WILL BECOME
UNTENABLE.

GET 'D' COMPANY
ON THE NET, SIGNALLER.
I'LL SEND PAINE IN, SIR,
WITH 'C' COMPANY TO
FOLLOW UP...

'CONNOR WAS ONE OF CAPTAIN PAINE'S PLATOON COMMANDERS. PAINE HAD FOUGHT WITH HIM IN THE WESTERN DESERT AND HE THOUGHT A LOT OF CONNOR...



ORDERS FROM
B.H.Q... CAPTAIN. WE'RE
TO CLEAR THE JERRIES
FROM THAT RIDGE
UP THERE.

YOU MAKE
IT SOUND LIKE
DUSTING OUT A
BILLET, CON. WELL...
HERE'S YOUR CHANCE
TO PICK UP A MEDAL
OR TWO...

Part of Death

'D' COMPANY WENT IN AT DAWN. THEY HAD TWO THOUSAND YARDS OF BARE HILL-SIDE TO COVER WITH THE SPANDAUS TRaversing every yard...

FORWARD - FORWARD!

AAAGH!

LEAVE THEM TO THE STRETCHER-BEARERS, MEN - KEEP GOING --



THE COMPANY LOST A THIRD OF ITS STRENGTH IN THE FIRST THOUSAND YARDS, BUT CONNOR KEPT HIS HEAD...

IF WE COULD GRAB THAT SPUR, SIR. WE'D BE ABLE TO TRAVERSE THE WHOLE RIDGE!

YOU'RE RIGHT, CON! BEAR LEFT, MEN!



THE GERMANS HAD A SPANDAU MOUNTED ON THE SPUR. THE OFFICER IN CHARGE SAW THE BRITISH MOVING TOWARDS HIM AND REALISED THE DANGER.



BUT BY THE TIME CONNOR HAD GOT WITHIN RIFLESHOT OF THE SPUR, HIS PLATOON HAD PRACTICALLY CEASED TO EXIST. CAPTAIN PAYNE WENT DOWN FIFTY YARDS FROM THE TOP...

KEEP GOING, CON - YOU CAN MAKE IT - YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE IT!



Pact of Death

CONNOR KEPT GOING. WITH THIRTY YARDS TO GO, HE LOOSED OFF A LONG BURST TO CUT DOWN THE CREW OF THE SPANDAU...

ACHTUNG!
THE ENGLANDERS
ARE THROUGH!



CONNOR WAS TWENTY YARDS FROM THE UNMANNED SPANDAU, AND THE WHOLE GERMAN LINE WAS AT HIS MERCY, WHEN A SHELLBURST CAUGHT THE SERGEANT AND THE HANDFUL OF HIS MEN...

AAGH!
GO ON, SIR -
THEY'VE GOT
ME —



Pact of Death

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AT THAT MOMENT CAPTAIN PAINES LYING
HELPLESS TWENTY YARDS BELOW, SAW
CONNOR SUDDENLY CHECK.

SERGEANT-

CON -
FOR HEAVEN'S
SAKE - THE SPANDAU -
GRAB THE SPANDAU!

TEN STRIDES WOULD
HAVE TAKEN CONNOR
TO THE TOP. HE COULD
HAVE TURNED THE
SPANDAU ON THE
GERMAN SECTION
RUNNING TO TAKE IT
OVER. HE COULD HAVE
SWEEPED THE ENEMY
POSITION WITH LEAD...

CON - KEEP GOING,
YOU FOOL - YOU
WON'T GET A
SECOND CHANCE!

SCHNELL!
WE MUST REACH
OUR GUN BEFORE
THE ENGLANDERS!

Pact of Death

CONNOR HAD GLORY IN HIS GRASP AT THAT MOMENT, BUT HE DELIBERATELY TURNED HIS BACK ON IT...

NO-NO, I LEFT A MAN TO DIE BEFORE - I WON'T DO IT AGAIN! I'VE GOT TO GO BACK - I'VE GOT TO SAVE A LIFE - I SWORE TO -



THE SERGEANT WAS LYING TEN YARDS BEHIND CONNOR WITH HIS HAND HELD UP, AS THOUGH HE WERE PLEADING FOR HELP. CONNOR RAN BACK TO HIM...

ALL RIGHT, SERGEANT - I'M COMING!



BUT THE SERGEANT WAS BEYOND HELP...

BLAZES! HE'S DEAD - HE MUST HAVE DIED WHEN THE SHRAPNEL HIT HIM! I TURNED BACK FOR NOTHING! BUT MAYBE I CAN STILL REACH THAT GUN...



BUT CONNOR WAS TOO LATE. THE GERMANS HAD REOCCUPIED THE SPUR BEFORE HE COULD MOVE AGAIN. THEY HAD BROUGHT UP A SECOND SPANDAU AND A MORTAR...



CONNOR LAY OUT ON THE BULLET-SWEPT SLOPE ALL DAY. HE HAD THROWN AWAY HIS CHANCE OF GLORY AND THE COMPANY HAD LOST THEIR CHANCE TO TAKE THE VITAL RIDGE.

COLONEL GAINSFORD CLOSED THE RECORD OF LIEUTENANT CONNOR. HE LOOKED UP THOUGHTFULLY AT THE ADJUTANT...

I WAS WRONG... BUT IF I'D BEEN RIGHT, I MIGHT HAVE SAVED THE LIFE OF THAT ONE MAN!

SO THEY HAD TO WITHDRAW FROM THAT RIDGE, EH?

YES, SIR. THE SURVIVORS GOT AWAY AFTER DARK. A WEEK LATER, THEY EVACUATED CRETE WITH THE REST OF THE ALLIED TROOPS. CONNOR WAS WITH THEM...



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Pact of Death

THE COLONEL SHUFFLED TOGETHER THE RECORDS OF CONNOR, LYNCH AND MACE. HE WAS A MAN OF QUICK DECISIONS...



WHEN THE RAID ON PALAISE HAD
BECOME HISTORY, COLONEL
GAINSFORD WAS TO REMEMBER
THE WORDS HE HAD USED THAT
DAY...



Chapter 3. *Act of Mercy*

ON THE NIGHT WHEN THE FIRST DRAFT OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ST. PALAISE RAID ARRIVED AT THE COMBINED OPERATIONS DEPOT IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND, THERE WAS AN AIR RAID ON THE NEARBY RAILWAY JUNCTION.

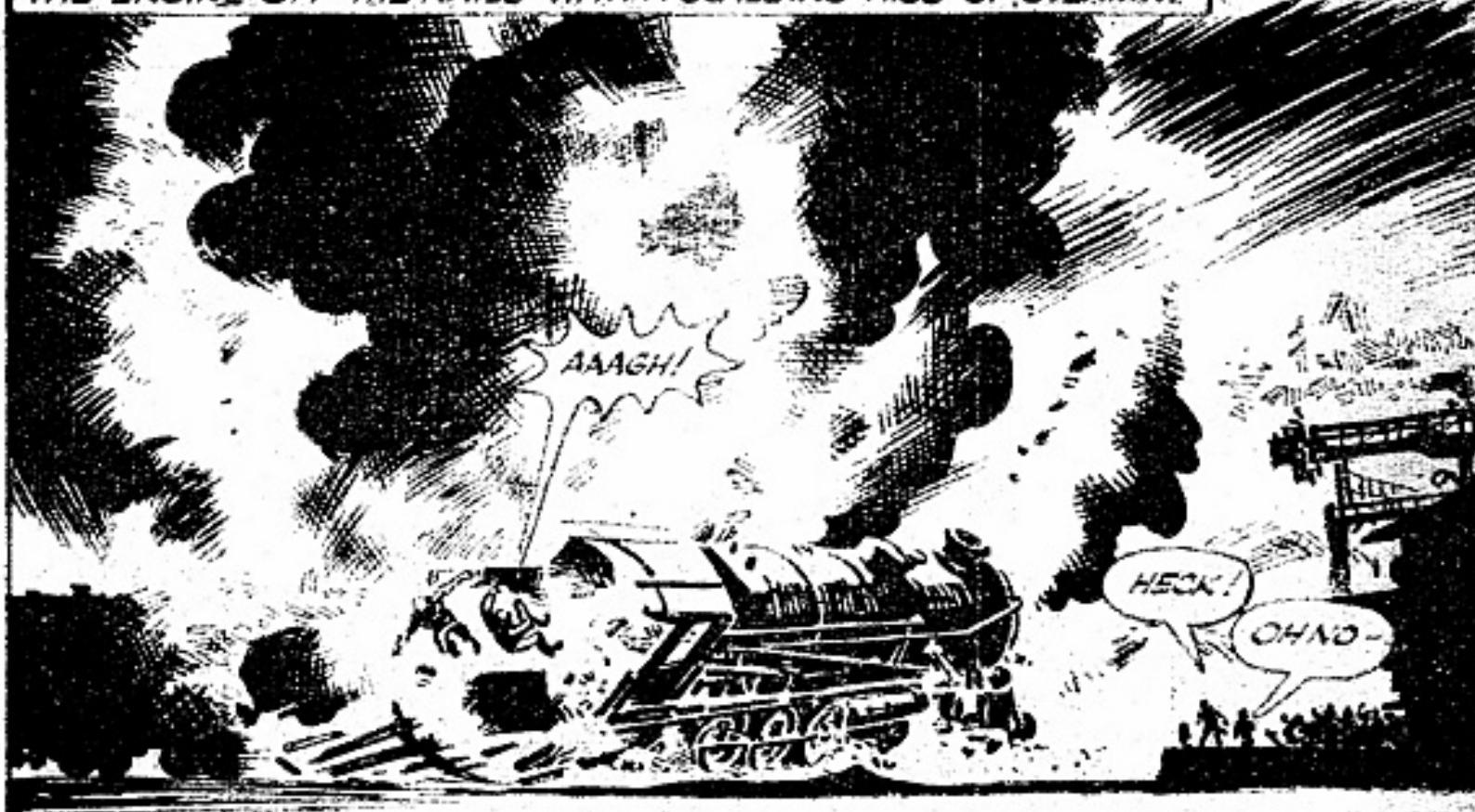


THERE WERE THREE HUNDRED MEN AND SIXTY OFFICERS FROM DIFFERENT UNITS IN THE STATION WHEN THE BOMBS THUMPED DOWN...



Pact of Death

THREE MEN IN THAT CROWD CHECKED AND TURNED AROUND AS THE BOMB TORE THE ENGINE OFF THE RAILS WITH A SCALDING HISS OF STEAM....



THE THREE MEN WERE OFFICERS. ONE WAS FROM THE ARMY, ONE FROM THE NAVY, ONE FROM THE AIR FORCE.



Pact of Death

31

A WARDEN BLOCKED THE THREE OFFICERS SECONDS BEFORE THE ENGINE BLEW UP...

KEEP BACK!
THERE'S NO HOPE FOR THEM!

GOOD GRIEF!

POOR DEVILS!



THAT WAS HOW, THREE YEARS AFTER THEIR LAST MEETING AND A LONG VIOLENT WAY FROM THE QUIET CLOISTERS OF ST. GAUL'S, CONNOR, LYNCH AND MACE MET AGAIN...

THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND IT WAS CONNOR WHO PUT THEIR THOUGHTS INTO WORDS...

SO YOU BOTH VOLUNTEERED, TOO? WHAT A COINCIDENCE!

IS IT, BRIAN? MAYBE WE ALL VOLUNTEERED FOR THE SAME REASON...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CON?



Pact of Death

THE SENIOR OFFICER WAS CALLING TO THEM FROM THE PLATFORM. THEY ONLY HAD TIME FOR A FEW WORDS...

HE MEANS THE REASON WE ALL TRIED TO SAVE THOSE POOR DEVILS ON THE ENGINE, DON'T YOU, CON?

YES, BRIAN. NONE OF US HAVE FORGOTTEN PENN, HAVE WE? OR THE PACT...

HEY—
YOU THREE—
THE TRUCKS ARE WAITING!

BUT THEY HAD NO NEED FOR WORDS. THEIR HANDS SAID ALL THEY NEEDED TO SAY. IN THE DARKNESS OF THE TRUCK ON THE WAY TO THE DEPOT...

I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN, CON!

NOR ME!

WELL... MAYBE
WE'LL GET A CHANCE
TO KEEP THE PACT
BEFORE THIS SHOW
IS OVER...

Pact of Death

NEXT MORNING
COLONEL GAINSFORD
INSPECTED THE
VOLUNTEERS...

THIS IS
CONNOR, SIR...
AND MACE...
AND LYNCH...

AH YES...
WELL, YOU THREE,
THERE'LL BE PLENTY
OF GLORY FOR US ON
THIS TRIP... I'M SURE
YOU'LL DO YOUR
BEST TO EARN IT.

THAT'S ALL WE
EVER WANTED,
SIR, THE CHANCE
TO EARN IT!

THEN THE COLONEL
ADDRESSED HIS
OFFICERS IN THE
OPERATIONS ROOM...

THE DRY DOCK AT
PALAISE IS THE ONLY ONE
ON THE NORTH FRENCH
COAST BIG ENOUGH TO
TAKE A POCKET
BATTLESHIP. OUR JOB
IS TO DENY THE USE
OF THAT DOCK TO
THE ENEMY...

Part of Death

OUR FORCE WILL SAIL INTO THE ESTUARY AT FIVE A.M. AN OBSOLETE DESTROYER, THE MACKAY, WILL BE RAMMED INTO THE DOCK GATES AT TOP SPEED. SHE WILL BE PACKED WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVE, WIRED TO DETONATE AT NINE A.M. PRECISELY.



THERE WAS A MODEL OF THE ST. PALAISE ESTUARY ON THE PLATFORM.

THE REST OF THE FORCE WILL HOLD THE DOCK AREA AND PREVENT THE GERMANS FROM BOARDING THE MACKAY AND DISMANTLING THE CHARGES BEFORE SHE BLOWS UP. NOW THIS IS A MODEL OF THE ESTUARY WHICH OUR M.L.s WILL HAVE TO NAVIGATE BEFORE WE CAN ATTACK THE DOCK. STUDY IT CLOSELY...



Pact of Death

41

THREE WEEKS LATER, ON A MOONLIT NIGHT
IN SEPTEMBER, THE SCENE THE MODEL
REPRESENTED BECAME A DEADLY REALITY...



THE FORCE WAS SIX MILES FROM
ST. PALAISE ITSELF WHEN THE
FIRST GERMAN BATTERY OPENED
FIRE...



Pact of Death.

THE GERMAN BATTERY BRACKETED COLONEL GAINSFORD'S LAUNCH WITH ITS SECOND SALVO. THREE SHELLS SCORED DIRECT HITS...

AAAGH!

THUNDER!
THEY'VE GOT
THE ENGINE-
ROOM!



IN THE SHATTERED COCKPIT OF THE LAUNCH, THE C.O. SPOKE CROUCHLY INTO HIS RADIO TRANSMITTER...

ENGINES ARE A WRITE-OFF, SKIPPER - AND THE CURRENT'S CARRYING US STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE JERRY GUNS!

LEADER TO ALL UNITS - CARRY ON TO YOUR OBJECTIVE - DO NOT COME TO OUR ASSISTANCE - I REPEAT, CARRY ON TO YOUR OBJECTIVE!



LIEUTENANT MACE HEARD THOSE STEADY ORDERS ON THE MOTOR LAUNCH HE COMMANDED...

DO NOT COME TO OUR ASSISTANCE!

HECK! WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THOSE MEN TO DIE. I'M GOING TO ALTER COURSE AND TAKE HER IN TOW.

BUT, SKIPPER—
THE COLONEL'S GIVEN US A DIRECT ORDER!



CONNOR AND LYNCH WERE BOTH ON MACE'S LAUNCH, THEY HAD COME GRIMLY TO MACE'S SIDE. THE YOUNG NAVAL LIEUTENANT SPOKE FOR THE THREE OF THEM...

ALL RIGHT, NUMBER ONE... SO THE REST OF YOU NEEDN'T DISOBEDIENCE THE COLONEL'S ORDER. I'M HANDING OVER COMMAND OF THIS SHIP TO YOU... BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT I VOLUNTEERED FOR... THE CHANCE TO SAVE A MAN'S LIFE!



THEY DIVED OVERBOARD TOGETHER. CONNOR AND LYNCH AND MACE, THREE MEN WHO HAD MADE A SCHOOLBOY PACT AND MEANT TO KEEP IT...

LET'S GO THEN, BRIAN... STEVE...

WITH YOU, CON...



Pact of Death

THE BRITISH FLOTILLA HELD ITS COURSE TOWARDS ST. PALAISE, LEAVING THE DERELICT M.L. DRIFTING TO SHORE UNDER THE GERMAN GUNS, AND THREE MEN SWIMMING TOWARDS IT THROUGH THE SHELLSWEPT WATER...



WHEN THE THREE MEN REACHED THE STRICKEN M.L. TEN MINUTES LATER SHE WAS ROLLING WATERLOGGED IN SHALLOW WATER, SILENT UNDER THE HISSING BULLETS.

THEY CAN'T ALL BE DEAD, CAN THEY?

NO... BUT WOUNDED, MAYBE, NEEDING OUR HELP.

COME ON, THEN...



Pact of Death

45



THE GERMAN BATTERY WAS SITED ON
THE HIGH BANK EIGHTY YARDS ABOVE
THE DERELICT LAUNCH. IT WAS UNDER
ATTACK...

RUSH THEM
MEN!
CHARGE!

IT'S THE
COLONEL
AND HIS
MEN!

AND WE
THOUGHT WE
COULD SAVE
THEM!

Pact of Death

COLONEL GAINSFORD AND THE THIRTY SURVIVORS FROM THE M.L. HAD REACHED SHORE WITH THEIR WEAPONS.



DESPERATELY TRYING TO RETRIEVE THEIR MISTAKE, CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH SCRAMBLED UP THE STEEP SLOPE TO JOIN IN THE FIGHT...



Pact of Death

BUT THE FIGHT WAS OVER BEFORE THE THREE YOUNG
OFFICERS COULD REACH THE BATTERY.



COLONEL GAINSFORD
SWUNG AROUND. HIS
FACE DARKENED...



Pact of Death

THE COLONEL'S VOICE
WAS BLEAK ...

I ORDERED YOU
TO CARRY ON TO YOUR
OBJECTIVE. WHAT THE
BLAZES MAKES YOU THREE
THINK THAT YOUR DUTY
IS TO SAVE LIVES, RATHER
THAN TO FIGHT?

COLONEL...
YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND...



FAR UP THE ESTUARY, THE MACKAY
AND THE FLOTILLA OF M.L.s WERE
ENGAGING THE GERMAN BATTERIES
NEAR THE DOCKS.

NO, CONNOR,
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
IT'S GOING TO TAKE US ALL
OF FOUR HOURS TO REACH
PALAISE ON FOOT, AND IF
WE GET THERE AT ALL
WE'LL PROBABLY BE
TOO LATE ANYWAY!



Chapter 4. *The Glory*



THE OLD DESTROYER WENT IN AT
SEVENTEEN KNOTS. SHE BURIED HER
BOWS UP TO THE BRIDGE STRUCTURE IN
TANGLED STEEL AND CONCRETE...



THERE WERE FIVE TONS OF HIGH
EXPLOSIVE IN THE HULL OF THE MACKAY.
AN R.E. CAPTAIN WIRED THE
CHARGES AND SET THE FUSE...



Part of Deal.

THE M.L.s WERE ALREADY MAKING FAST TO THE QUAY WHEN THE ORDER TO ABANDON SHIP WAS GIVEN ABOARD THE MACKAY. THE GERMANS WERE REACTING SHARPLY...



THE BRITISH COMMANDOS POURED ON TO THE QUAY THROUGH THE CURTAIN OF MORTAR AND SPANDAU FIRE WHICH THE GERMANS WERE BEGINNING TO THROW ACROSS THE DOCK AREA.



IN THE NEXT HOUR, A SAVAGE BATTLE BEGAN TO DEVELOP ACROSS THE DOCKS AS THE GERMANS THREW IN STRONG REINFORCEMENTS...



COLONEL GAINSFORD'S TINY FORCE, FIVE MILES AWAY, SAW THE GLARE IN THE SKY AND CURSED SAVAGELY...



NO-ONE SPOKE TO CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH. THEY WERE LEFT ALONE IN THEIR BITTERNESS...



Pact of Death

BUT THERE WERE TOO MANY MINEFIELDS, TOO MANY DETOURS. IT WAS EIGHT FORTY-FIVE A.M. BY THE TIME COLONEL GAINSFORD AND HIS MEN REACHED THE DOCKS AT ST. PALAISE, AND THE FIGHTING WAS OVER...



THE COLONEL AND HIS MEN HUGGED THE SHADOWS AND WATCHED THEIR COMRADES BEING MARCHED AWAY. BUT IT SEEMED THAT THESE BEATEN MEN HAD DONE THEIR JOB WELL...



BUT COLONEL GAINSFORD HAD SPOKEN TOO SOON. SUDDENLY, IN THE HUSHED SILENCE, A VOICE CRIED OUT FROM THE OLD DESTROYER.

HEY - WE'RE STILL IN THE MACKAY! HEY, MATES DON'T LEAVE US HERE!

GOOD GRIEF! SOME OF THE BLOKES MUST HAVE BEEN TRAPPED ABOARD THE DESTROYER!

THEY'RE GOING TO GIVE THE GAME AWAY...



IT WAS EIGHT FORTY-NINE A.M. THE DESTROYER WAS DUE TO BLOW UP IN ELEVEN MINUTES...

HELP, MATES - THERE'S WOUNDED MEN IN HERE. GET US OUT BEFORE THE CHARGE GOES UP...

LAUSCHEN - YOU SPEAK ENGLISH. WHAT DOES THE ENGLANDER SAY?

A CHARGE, HERR MAJOR. THIS I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. WAIT -



54

Pact of Death



IT WAS CONNOR WHO SPOKE. MACE AND LYNCH WERE CLOSE BEHIND HIM.

IF YOU AND YOUR MEN CAN HOLD OFF THE GERMANS, SIR, MACE, LYNCH AND I WILL GET ABOARD THE DESTROYER AND RELEASE THOSE TRAPPED MEN...

YOU THREE AGAIN. IT MEANS SOMETHING TO YOU, DOESN'T IT, SAVING THOSE LIVES?

THE GERMANS ON THE QUAY WERE RUNNING TOWARDS THE DESTROYER NOW. THERE WAS A KIND OF RESPECT IN COLONEL GAINSFORD'S HARD... TOUGH SMILE...

YES, SIR... IT MEANS SOMETHING TO US!

ALL RIGHT, CONNOR - YOU KNOW THE RISK. YOU'RE RUNNING - YOU'VE GOT EXACTLY NINE MINUTES NOW BEFORE THE DESTROYER BLOWS UP - SAFETY CATCHES OFF, MEN - FOLLOW ME!

16 Pact of Death

THE GERMANS WERE FIFTY YARDS FROM THE DESTROYER WHEN COLONEL GAINSFORD AND HIS MEN BURST OUT OF THE SHADOWS WITH HAMMERING GUNS...



THE THREE RACED FORWARD AS COLONEL GAINSFORD THREW HIS MEN BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND THE DESTROYER...

GET MORE MEN, HAUPTMANN, SCHNELL!



IT WAS EIGHT FIFTY TWO A.M. WHEN THE THREE MEN CLIMBED ON TO THE RUINED FOREDECK OF THE DESTROYER, BUT THE AGONISED VOICE GAVE THEM DIRECTION...



IT TOOK THEM TWO MINUTES TO LOCATE THE BULKHEAD--AND ANOTHER MINUTE OF USELESS BATTERING AT IT...

IT'S NO GOOD, CON--
IT WON'T BUDGE!

ONLY FIVE
MINUTES TO GO-

STAND BACK,
INSIDE THERE--
I'M GOING TO USE
A GRENADE!

CONNOR PULLED THE PIN OF THE GRENADE AND WEDGED IT CLOSE TO THE STEEL JAMB OF THE DOOR...

THAT'S
DONE IT, CON!

COME ON
OUT MEN--
HURRY!

THE MEN TRAPPED BY THE COLLISION CAME STUMBLING OUT THROUGH THE SHATTERED DOOR.

ARE THERE ANY MORE IN THERE?
NO-NO, SIR - JUST THE THREE OF US. THANK HEAVENS YOU GOT US OUT!

IT WAS EIGHT FIFTY-SIX A.M., BUT NEITHER CONNOR, MACE NOR LYNCH LOOKED AT THEIR WATCHES. THREE LONG YEARS ARE NOT MEASURED ON WATCHES...

WELL, BRIAN, STEVE... THERE WERE THREE MEN...

YES, CON... THREE LIVES SAVED... SO WE KEPT THE PACT!

QUICK! SIR, THERE'S ONLY FOUR MINUTES TO GO!

WITH THREE MINUTES TO GO BEFORE THE MACAY WAS DUE TO EXPLODE, THE GERMANS LAUNCHED A LAST DESPERATE ATTACK. IT OVERRAN COLONEL GAINSFORD AND HIS MEN...

LOOK, JERRY'S BREAKING THROUGH, CON!



Pact of Death

59

COLONEL GAINSFORD WAS THE LAST MAN TO GO DOWN.
HE GROANED AS THE GERMANS RUSHED PAST HIM
TOWARDS THE DESTROYER...

QUICK, MEN!
THERE IS STILL TIME
FOR US TO DISMANTLE
THOSE CHARGES!

WE'VE FAILED—
WE'VE FAILED —



BUT THERE WERE
STILL THREE MEN
ON BOARD THE
DOOMED DESTROYER
AS THE GERMANS
RUSHED TOWARDS IT.

WELL,
THE COLONEL
SAID THERE'D BE
PLENTY OF GLORY
FOR US ON THIS
SHOW!



Pact of Death

CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH HAD GUNS IN THEIR HANDS NOW AND THEY WERE SMILING...

YES, CON...
AND THIS TIME,
MAYBE, WE'VE
EARNED IT...



IT WAS EIGHT FIFTY-SEVEN A.M. WHEN THE GERMANS REACHED THE DESTROYER AND THE GUNS OF CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH BLASTED THEM BACK...



FOR TWO MINUTES THE GERMANS FLUNG WAVE AFTER WAVE OF DESPERATE TROOPS AT THE BATTERED DESTROYER AND THE THREE MEN STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER ON ITS DOOMED DECK...



COLONEL GAINSFORD AND HIS MEN, PRISONERS ON THE QUAY, WATCHED THAT LAST SAVAGE BATTLE WITH GRIM EYES AND DRY THROATS...



THERE WERE ONLY FIFTEEN SECONDS LEFT WHEN A GRENADE BLASTED CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH TO THE DECK. THEY WERE STILL FIRING AS THEY FELL ...



THE DYING HANDS OF THE THREE MEN WHO HAD MADE A SCHOOLBOY PACT, MET IN THOSE LAST SECONDS BEFORE THE DESTROYER ELEW UP UNDER THEM...



Pact of Death

CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH
HAD KEPT THEIR PACT. THEY
HAD EARNED THEIR GLORY...



IT WAS FIVE YEARS LATER, WHEN THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS OVER, THAT A REUNION OF OLD BOYS WAS HELD AT ST. GAUL'S SCHOOL...



SERGEANT DONOVAN LISTENED TO THE CASUAL VOICES FOR A WHILE...



WHEN HE SPOKE, DONOVAN'S VOICE HAD A STRANGE KIND OF REGRET AND PRIDE IN IT...

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT BECAME OF THEM, SIR. THEY EARNED THE RIGHT TO BE HERE, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, TO BE A PART OF THIS SCHOOL... TO HOLD THEIR HEADS UP AGAIN AMONG THE BEST OF YOU... THE ONES THAT WON'T EVER COME BACK...



THE NAMES OF CONNOR, MACE AND LYNCH WERE INSCRIBED ON THE ROLL OF HONOUR OF ST. GAUL'S SCHOOL, AMONG THE NAMES OF THEIR COMRADES...

ALAN CONNOR, D.S.O.
BRIAN MACE, D.S.O.
STEPHEN LYNCH, D.S.O.
DANIEL GRANT
MICHAEL PERKINS
JOSEPH LARRIGAN

Pact of Death

A LOT OF PACTS ARE MADE BY SCHOOLBOYS. MOST OF THEM ARE FORGOTTEN AS THE MEN WHO MADE THEM GROW OLDER. THIS WAS ONE PACT WHICH WAS SEALED IN BLOOD...



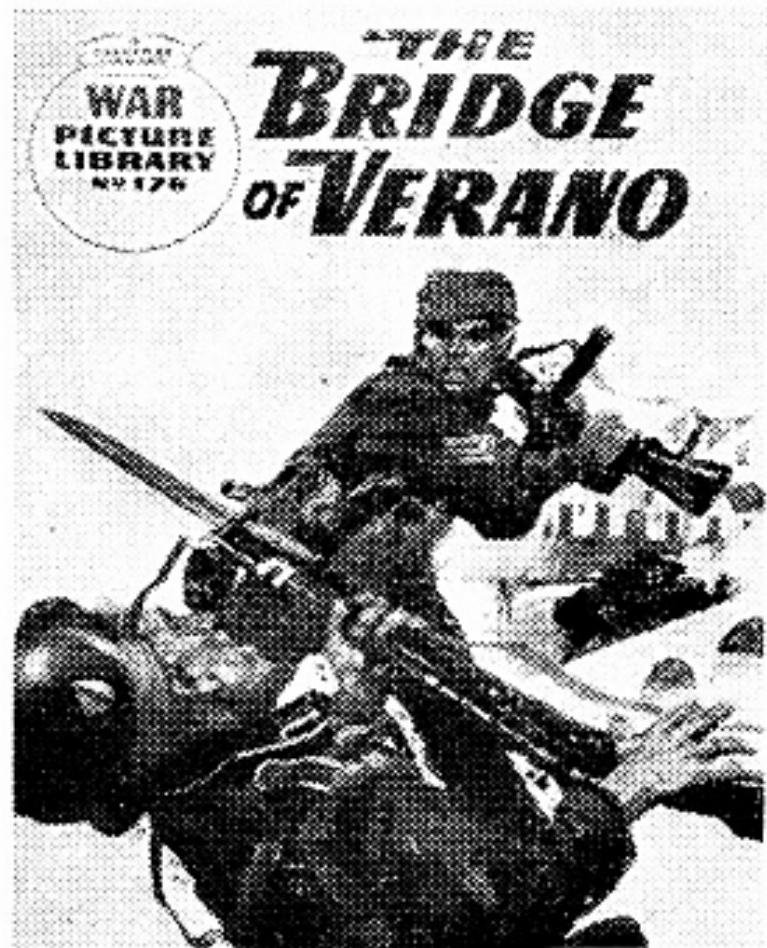
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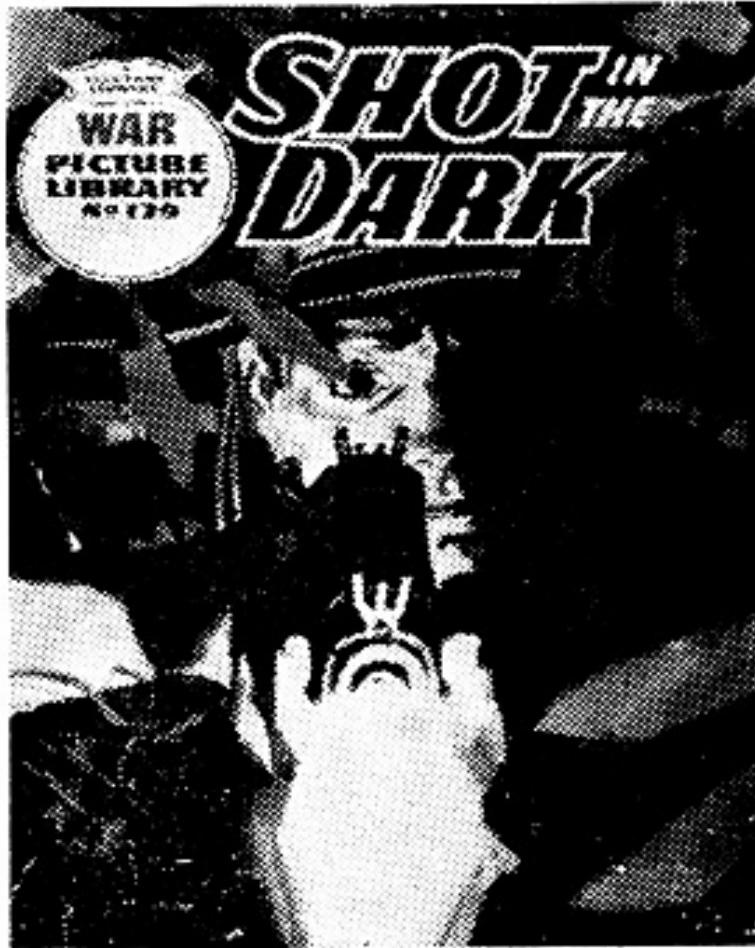
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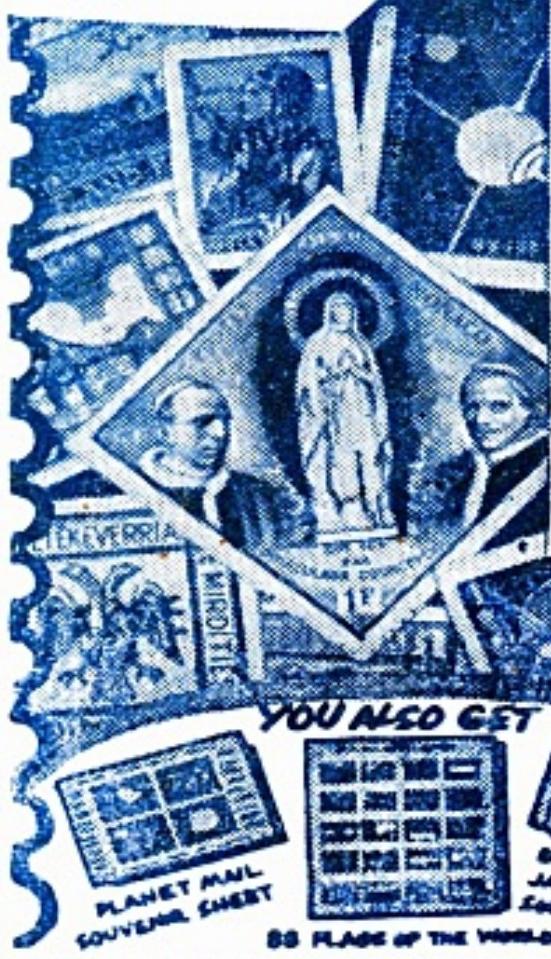
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